

WASHINGTON – At a press conference sponsored by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Joyce Foundation today, Congressman Kirk urged Congress to implement tougher gun violence laws resulting from the recommendations of the Great Lakes Summit on Gun Violence. The report, entitled “Taking a Stand: Reducing Gun Violence in Our Communities,” recommends proposals that would require all gun sales to take place through federally licensed dealers, allow local law enforcement to use federal gun trace data and take stronger steps for the safe storage of guns in homes.

“There are more than 3,000 gang members living north of Lake-Cook Road, and all have relatively easy access to weapons,” Congressman Kirk said. “Besides the tragic loss of life and injuries associated with gun violence, we are creating environments that breed more crime. We need to implement common-sense policies that will curb gun violence and reduce gang activity – making our communities safer and stronger.”

Recently released figures from the State of Illinois show a 3.1 percent increase in serious crime in Lake County from 2005 to 2006. 15,681 incidents were reported in 2006. Illinois saw a 1.7 percent drop in violent and property crimes in the same period.

Last July, Congressman Kirk and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) introduced an amendment to the Justice Department Appropriations bill that would have repealed the “Tiahrt Amendment,” which prevents local police from accessing critical information regarding federally confiscated guns. Using a computerized database containing gun trace data, Chicago ATF agents determined that more than 300 guns used in gang-related crimes in Chicago were originally bought at only four gun shops in Mississippi. The gun shops were Mega Pawn, Krosstown Trade and Pawn, and the North Delta Gun Shop in Clarksdale, and Route 61 Trade and Pawn in Tunica.

In March, 19 people were arrested in connection with the Mississippi-to-Chicago gun smuggling network. But because of the Tiahrt Amendment, the ATF was unable to share the data they used to break up the gun-running ring with local police. The Kirk-Kennedy Amendment would have given local police access to the database.

“There is a growing threat of gang violence in the suburbs,” Congressman Kirk said. “Smaller police departments do not have the resources that the Chicago Police Department has to fight gangs. Giving suburban police access to the ATF trace data can help keep guns off our streets

and shut down interstate trafficking networks. Congress needs to implement the Kennedy-Kirk Amendment in conjunction with the recommendations of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. It's the best way to help keep our communities safe from gun violence.”

The full report is available at <http://www.iacp.org/> .